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REPORT

ON LANDS

In the Counties of

Wise and Buchanan, Virginia,

AND

McDowell, West Virginia.

PHILADELPHIA:

PRESS OF WILLIAM F. MURPHY'S SONS, 509 CHESTNUT STREET.

1882.





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REPORT ON LANDS
IN THE COUNTIES OF
WISE AND BUCHANAN,
VIRGINIA,
—AND—
MCDOWELL,
WEST VIRGINIA.

Timber—Value, &c.

It consists, in its original forest growth, of white oak, chestnut oak, black walnut, white walnut or butternut, poplar, hickory, maple, ash, beech, gum, linn—attaining maximum size of twenty-five to ninety feet to first limbs, girth three to eighteen feet, and considerably more in single instances with greatest perfection as regards strength and durability.

This is a matter of great importance in ship and boat building, and in the manufacture of railroad cars and agricultural implements.

Lumber experts estimate the yield in board measure from 15,000 to 20,000 feet per acre from the deciduous hard timber in these counties.

I estimate that there is, of poplar trees to the acre that will square two feet and upwards, at least, four, and as many more that will square eighteen inches and up to two feet, and as many white oaks that will square the same, and about one black walnut to four acres. There is

also considerable of chestnut oak which I think will average, at least, four trees to the acre that will square from eighteen inches to two feet. The bark of this oak is valuable for tanning leather.

Up to the present time the timber is floated out of the streams in saw logs, and either formed in large rafts in deeper water in lower parts in the main streams or caught in "booms" and there sawed into lumber for distribution to markets, down the Ohio Valley or by the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad and other railroad connections, via. Catlettsburg, for the Eastern markets.

The logs (12 feet long) are purchased by the lumber manufacturers, delivered in any stream attaining floating depth at any freshet, at from \$1.00 and \$2.00, according to size and kind of timber; or the timber is purchased at the "stump," at the rate of \$1.00 to \$1.50 per tree, according to the size and kind of timber, a stumpage value which must materially enhance by the direct Eastern outlet which proposed railroads will open up, viz: the Virginia, Kentucky and Ohio, running from Louisville, Ky., through these estates to Wytheville, Va., there connecting with the Virginia roads or with the branch road from Glade Springs to Saltville, then with same line at Glade Springs and with its branch (Virginia, Kentucky and Ohio) running from Jeffersonville to Pennington's Gap.

Even on this low basis of the stumpage value, and on the moderated yield, each acre will have an available value of at least, in timber, of \$15.00.

This productive yield has only reference to timber to be sawed into boards or square timber, and does not include timber or wood in any other shape, such as railroad ties, all kinds of cooperage stuff, ship-knees, hoop poles, shingles, tan bark, (chestnut oak). With said railroad outlet, this timbered region will readily be taken up by the lumber trade on "Timber Leave" in large sections, and at higher rates.

A characteristic of these forests is the light undergrowth, or its entire absence, a circumstance greatly facilitating the clearing and taking off the timber, or preparing of the ground for planting and seeding, or for fattening blue grass pastures.

Coal.

Coal exists in many and large seams, in almost horizontal position, as bituminous and splint coal; accessible above water level at many objective points along the principal valleys, and their branches in fact. All the Kanawha and New River coals are represented here, the seams varying in thickness from three to fourteen feet.

Iron Ore.

There is also large quantities of iron ore on these lands, as shown by the outcroppings of large deposits, which show to be of a high grade. These deposits are in close proximity to large seams of coal that can be used in the manufacture of iron.

Two of the principal seams, or rather ledges of iron, are on what is known as "The Big Ridge," in Wise County. Two of them are located on Indian Creek, in Buchanan County.

These iron outcroppings would be near the line of the proposed railroad.

The Soil.

The size and kind of timber is sufficient to tell the strength and depth of the soil.

A dark, deep, humous earth, the product of accumulated and decayed vegetable matter from ages, perceptibly deeper on northern exposures, covers the whole of these lands—river flats and uplands alike, which renders them of almost equal productiveness.

This rich top-soil is underlaid by a sub-soil of an argillaceous clayey, calcareous and sandy composition; the one or the other of the constituents predominating at different localities.

The loamy soils, composed of clay and sand mixed in about equal proportions, and containing twenty to twenty-five per cent. of calcareous, feruginous. vegetable and other matter, are the soils of the land.

The superior fertility of the upland soils explains the great size of the timber that grows upon them.

Mica.

There is a vein of this valuable mineral in the vicinity of Indian Creek, as can be seen by a sample that I took from a ledge on a small branch of the creek which empties into it about four miles from its mouth, at or near the dwelling of David Tiller.

Manganese.

I was informed by a Mr. H. W. Beaver that there were large deposits of Manganese on the estate in Buchanan County; but I did not get to see the outcroppings, as it was so far in the forests, (the estate being almost an unbroken wilderness), and my time being limited, and Mr. Beaver being acquainted with the mineral and a reliable gentleman, I have every reason to believe it to be as above stated.

Salt Springs.

There are two Salt Springs on this estate, one of which is at Sand Lick, on the Russell Fork of the Big Sandy, which empties into the Big Sandy seven miles above Piketon, Ky., and one at the mouth of Indian Creek, on the same river.

During the war the people made all the salt they used from these springs; the water is said to be full as strong as that from the springs at Saltville, Washington County, Va., (the salt being much stronger,) from which is manufactured annually 700,000 bushels of salt, and paying handsome dividends on a capital stock of \$1,000,000.

I think these springs could be made to pay a *large* return on a liberal investment.

Rivers.

These estates are well watered by the Russell Fork of the Big Sandy; the Louisa Fork; the Pound Fork; Crane's Nest Fork; the Tug Fork, and all of their numerous branches and creeks, many of which are as large, or nearly so, as the main branches, all of which are large enough to float timber into the main branches, at any of the periodical rises, which transport rafts to the Big Sandy, which empties into the Ohio River at Catlettsburg, Kentucky.

Adaptability of Wise County Tract.

The tract in Wise County, of 220,000 acres, is well adapted for all kinds of farming, as well as for grazing. At and around Wise—or Gladeville, as called by people—there is a plateau of vast extent, extending nearly east and west for upwards of twenty miles, varying in width from two to five miles. This beautiful plane is covered with the choicest of timber, and is also underlaid with large deposits of coal and iron ore—the iron ore so pure that it can be used in the shop direct from the mines—the coal so free from sulphur that it can be used to work iron, and burns freely in an open grate. There is also another plateau, known as “The Big Ridge.” In this tract, which extends also into the tract in Buchanan County, varying in width of from one mile to three, extending in about the same direction as the other for something like fifteen miles. On this plateau there is also plenty of coal and iron. The extension of the “Chattaroi Railway” from “Peach Orchard,” Kentucky, to “Imboden City,” or Pennington's Gap, will run to Gladeville or Wise Court House, then to Imboden City via this large plateau, giving a direct eastern outlet from the west

by a through line 140 miles nearer the seaboard. There is also a proposed branch of the Virginia, Kentucky and Ohio to start from a junction near Jeffersonville, Tazewell County, Virginia, which runs through this tract via the smaller plateau to Gladeville, then via the larger one to Imboden City. These two lines once built (and one or both will surely be built at once), the value of these lands will enhance very much.

On the tract I estimate not to exceed 25,000 acres, owned or claimed by squatters.

In concluding this report, I beg to say that I have been looking up timber lands for the past year, and must say that of all the tracts that I have traveled over, and after traveling over these particular estates over two hundred miles on horseback, that they contain the finest timber, the greatest number of trees to the acre, the best seams of coal and other minerals; are the best farming lands, and are better located for shipping timber than any that I have yet examined, and I can safely and conscientiously recommend this property to any one wishing to invest money in timber lands, as a paying investment.

F. M. GARDNER.

GRUNDY, BUCHANAN CO., VA., November 7th, 1881.

To Whom it may Concern :

We have read Mr. F. M. Gardner's reports on the timber, coal and other minerals on a tract of 239,000 acres of land in Buchanan County, Va., also a tract of 220,000 acres in Wise County, Va., and from what we know of the country, having lived in the country all our lives, and being civil engineers and surveyors, do not hesitate to say that all of his report is substantially true, to the best of our knowledge and belief. We further state that, if the estate in Buchanan County was resurveyed, that, without doubt, it would survey, by horizontal measurement, at least 275,000 acres instead of 240,000 acres, which is the number of acres in the survey which placed it on the tax list for which it is now taxed.

Signed,

J. BALDWIN,

Surveyor Buchanan Co.

H. W. BEAVER,

Civil Engineer and Surveyor.

GRUNDY, BUCHANAN CO., VA., November 7th, 1881.

To Whom it may Concern:

To the best of our knowledge and belief, we do not think that there is over 20,000 acres of the estate in Buchanan County, and 25,000 acres of that in Wise County, Va., known as the Miller lands, that is claimed by legal occupants or squatters.

J. BALDWIN, S. B. C.

H. W. BEAVER, C. E. & S.

STATE OF VIRGINIA, BUCHANAN COUNTY, *to wit:*

This certifies that I am well acquainted with Jacob Baldwin, of this County; that he is now the County Surveyor of Buchanan County; that he is a competent Surveyor, and a gentleman of good judgment, and worthy of the confidence of all.

I am also well acquainted with H. W. Beaver, of this County, and can say that he is a gentleman of fine character and worthy of the confidence of all; that he is a Civil Engineer and Surveyor, and that he took the Census Report of this the (Garden District), last year; and that his judgment in anything pertaining to surveying land, timber, &c., is good.

Given under my hand and seal of Buchanan County Court, this the tenth day of November, A. D., 1881.

Signed,

[SEAL.]

JOSEPH HIBBITTS, Clerk.

WISE, WISE COUNTY, VA.

The facts embraced in the foregoing statements are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

This November 5th, 1881.

Signed,

T. G. WELLS,

Late Clerk Wise County Circuit Courts.

EXTRACTS FROM THE REPORT MADE TO THE LEGISLATURE OF VIRGINIA
OF THE GEOLOGICAL RECONNOISSANCE, OF THE STATE OF VIRGINIA, BY
WILLIAM B. RODGERS, PROFESSOR OF NATURAL PHILOSOPHY IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA.

*Particularly relating to that part of the State bordering on the Clinch
and other rivers, in the Counties of Russell and Tazewell.*

The western section of Virginia is characterized throughout by geographical features of great simplicity. The loftiest hills rise in gently swelling outlines, and no very prominent peaks tower in acute and ragged lines, to denote that the strata have been subjected to violent, convulsive and upheaving forces. Everything bespeaks it to have been, at one time, an expanded plain gently tilted from the horizontal position, so that its surface and the beds of rock beneath, decline with a slight but very uniform depression, very generally towards the north-west to the valley of the Ohio.

The form, direction and character of both hills and valleys, give evidence that its inequalities of surface were caused by the furrowing action of a mighty devastating rush of waters, which by a rapid drainage scooped out enormous valleys and basins in the upper strata, the remnants of which are consequently traceable across the widest valleys, from hill to hill, holding the same elevation, thickness and inclination to the horizon. It is from this deep excavation of the strata by natural causes, combined with the other important circumstances of a nearly horizontal position, that we are to draw our estimate of the prodigious resources of a mineral kind possessed by the region before us.

Whatever valuable materials lie included in the strata of the district—coal, salt, oil, limestone or iron ore, the horizontal position alluded to keeps them near the surface, or at an accessible depth, over enormously wide spaces of country, while the trough-like structure of the valleys, and their great depth, exposes the edges of many of these deposits to the day, under positions in which mining is the easiest imaginable, and with an extent of development not less accommodating to the researches of the scientific geologist than bountiful to the wants of the community. Coal is also found, though in less considerable seams, along the valley of the Clinch River. Near Tug River it is very abundant.

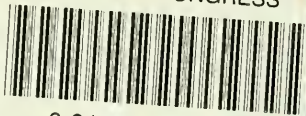
On the Big Sandy the exposure of coal is one of the most extensive and valuable anywhere in the United States; and here, from its immediate vicinity to the Salines, its practical usefulness has been tested on a wide and profitable scale. On the other rivers in this portion of the West, the beds of this mineral are frequently brought to view, and in

fact no better general description can be presented of its extent than that it is almost continuous with the vast beds of sandstone, which spread in nearly horizontal plains over nearly the whole of this broad region.

A simple enumeration of the strata here exposed will furnish an illustration of the resources of this corner of the State, well calculated to inspire astonishment and exultation. Upon a stratum of valuable iron ore, not less than fifteen feet in thickness, there rests a bed of sandstone upon which reposes a coal seam three feet thick ; above this another bed of sandstone, then a two foot vein of coal, next sandstone, then another coal seam of four feet ; again a stratum of sandstone, and over it a seven foot vein of coal ; over this a heavy bed of iron ore, and crowning the series, an enormous coal seam of from fifteen to twenty feet in thickness.

There is no point of view, however, in which the immeasurable riches of this region are rendered more obvious to our minds than that of the uniform and continuous structure which has already been described ; for it is in these widely spreading strata of sandstone that nearly all the boundless treasures of this country are enclosed, and the continuous character exhibited by them gives the strongest possible assurance of a like uninterrupted extension of the various beds of valuable materials which they include. In this view, how magnificent is the picture of the resources of this region, and how exhilarating the contemplation of all the happy influences upon the enterprise, wealth and intellectual improvement of its inhabitants, which are rapidly to follow the successive development of its inexhaustible mineral possessions. In a country where the channels of nearly all the principal rivers have been scooped out in part through beds of coal, where some of them are paved with the richest ores of iron, and where the very rock itself, the sterile sandstone of the cliff, is enriched at certain depths with abundant stores of salt, what more is needed to fulfil the happy and glorious destinies that await it than to awaken enterprise to a due appreciation of the golden promises it holds out, and to direct industrious and active research to the thorough investigation of the character, position and uses of the treasures it contains.

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